

## Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 /016 W  
----- 029166

R 240917Z JAN 75  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6521  
INFO USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC UR

SUBJECT: DOCUMENTARY FILM ON U.S. ROMAN KARMEN

1. DOCUMENTARY FILM DIRECTOR ROMAN KARMEN AT HIS INITIATIVE CALLED JANUARY 23 ON AMBASSADOR TO SOUND OUT POSSIBILITIES FOR REACTIVATING HIS PROJECT TO DO FILM ON U.S. THIS PROJECT HAS LONG HISTORY AND COMPLICATIONS KNOWN TO DEPARTMENT, BUT NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN EMBASSY FILES.

2. KARMEN'S INITIAL OBJECTIVE WAS TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE WOULD BE GRANTED A VISA FOR THE PROJECT THIS TIME.

3. IF PERMISSION WERE GRANTED, KARMEN SAID HE WOULD MAKE A PRELIMINARY VISIT AT END OF FEBRUARY FOR CONTACTS AND ARRANGEMENTS.

HE PARTICULARLY MENTIONED INTENTION OF CONTACTING ARMAND HAMMER OR DONALD KENDALL TO SOLICIT FINANCIAL SUPPORT. HE EXPLAINED THIS INTEREST BY SAYING THAT HE WAS MEMBER OF AN "EXPERIMENTAL UNIT" WITHIN MOSFILM WHICH IN EFFECT WAS COMMERCIAL AND PROFIT-SHARING. ARRANGEMENTS COMPLETED, KARMEN WOULD RETURN IN MAY WITH A CREW OF SEVEN, INCLUDING TWO CAMERAMEN AND A SOUND ENGINEER, TO BEGIN A SIX-MONTH SHOOTING SCHEDULE.

4. KARMEN ENVISAGES THE FILM COVERING THE HISTORY OF US-USSR RELATIONS FROM LENIN TO THE PRESENT, WITH VIGNETTES OF AMERICANS OF ALL WALKS OF LIFE. HE WOULD ALSO USE HISTORICAL FOOTAGE FROM ARCHIVES OF BOTH COUNTRIES. HE IS TIMING FILM TO APPEAR IN  
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1976 OCCASION OF AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL AND HE

SEES IT AS AN APPROPRIATE EXPRESSION OF THE INCREASINGLY CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HIS FILM WOULD BE "OBJECTIVE, ALTHOUGH OF COURSE SHOT FROM HIS OWN POINT OF VIEW AS AN ARTIST." WE COULD BE CONFIDENT OF ONE THING, HE SAID, THAT HIS FILM WOULD NOT BE HARMFUL TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DETENTE AS ENUNCIATED BY GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV AND AMERICA' LEADERS.

5. IN A SUBSEQUENT ASIDE KARMEN EXPRESSED HOPE HE WOULD NOT BE LIMITED IN SCOPE, "AS SOVIET JOURNALISTS ARE," BUT WOULD BE ABLE TO VISIT AND FILM ALL OVER THE U.S. HE ASKED FOR AND WAS GIVEN A CATALOGUE OF P & C FILMS WHICH HE PLANS TO SEE FOR ORIENTATION WHEN HE LEAVES SANATORIUM OUTSIDE MOSCOW WHERE HE IS NOW STAYING. KARMEN LOOKED HIS FULL 69 YEARS BUT, ACKNOWLEDGING HIS HISTORY OF HEART DISEASE, SAID HE WAS REGAINING HIS STRENGTH AS RESULT OF HIS CURRENT REST PROGRAM

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: IT IS OUR OPINION THAT EVENTS AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME HAVE CONSPIRED TO PRESENT US WITH POSSIBILITY THAT KARMEN WOULD PRODUCE A DOCUMENTARY FILM ON THE U.S. THAT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY POSITIVE ON BALANCE AND WHICH WOULD BE SEEN BY MILLIONS OF SOVIET CITIZENS. WE RECOGNIZE AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE QUESTION OF RECIPROCITY FOR AN AMERICAN FILM-MAKER CONTINUES TO EXIST IN PRINCIPLE AND POSSIBLY ALSO IN FACT. WE SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT THE BEST COURSE OPEN TO US IS TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR KARMEN'S PROPOSED PROJECT WITH MAXIMUM DISPATCH AND FACILITATION, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF TRAVEL SUCH AS GRANTED TO EXCHANGE PROGRAM VISITORS. WE WOULD HAVE MADE A VALUABLE POINT ABOUT CONFIDENCE IN DETENTE AND OUR DEDICATION TO THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION AND WE WOULD PROBABLY ACHIEVE POSITIVE EXPOSURE OF THE U.S. TO A WIDE FILM AUDIENCE OTHERWISE LARGELY UNAVAILABLE TO US. WE WOULD BE IN A STRONG POSITION ALSO TO ASK FOR RECIPROCITY AFTER THE FACT IF AMERICAN FILM-MAKERS WERE INTERESTED IN A SIMILAR PROJECT IN THE USSR.

7. KARMEN WAS INFORMED THAT THE EMBASSY WAS NOT OPPOSED TO THE PROJECT IN PRINCIPLE AND IN FACT FELT THAT IT HAD OBVIOUS MERITS, BUT THAT IN VIEW OF ITS COMPLICATED HISTORY, A FULL KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH KARMEN VOLUNTEERED, THE QUESTION WOULD OF COURSE HAVE TO BE REFERRED TO WASHINGTON. PLEASE ADVISE.

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 JAN 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** SmithRJ  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** SmithRJ  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 11 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <23 OCT 2003 by SmithRJ>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** DOCUMENTARY FILM ON U.S. ROMAN KARMEN  
**TAGS:** OEXC, UR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006